AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

ALBANY MEDICAL COLLEGE,

JANUARY 21, 1851.

BY AMASA J. PARKER, LL. D.,

ONE OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE INSTITUTION.

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JOEL MUNSELL, PRINTER,
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ADDRESS.

It was not without hesitation, gentlemen graduates, that I accepted the invitation of the Faculty to address you on the present occasion. This duty has been generally discharged by some member of the medical profession; and it seemed to be appropriate, that the last advice given to you on your leaving, to engage in practice, should come from one of acknowledged medical learning and long professional experience, rather than from a person having neither of these qualifications. But it occurred to me, on further reflection, that it might be well to take an observation from a new and outside position;—to survey the field from a different point: for, as in natural philosophy, the angle of incidence is always equal to the angle of reflection, so here it may be that by sending a ray of light, though less sparkling and brilliant, from a new point, a corresponding change of reflection can be secured.

All of us who have passed that period of life, when we left the study of our profession to enter upon its practice, can sympathize with you deeply and most sincerely, in the emotions that move you at this most interesting crisis. Who can ever forget the tumult excited in his own bosom on a similar occasion? The buoyant anticipations of success; the cruel fears of disappointment, each alternately in the ascendant; the regrets at separating from classmates; the impatience of delay in engaging in battle of life; the painful suspense,—and the severe scrutiny to which we subject ourselves, in endeavoring to resolve our doubts, as to our own acquirements and qualifications: These are incident to all graduates and to all professions. And I would not have it otherwise. These emotions and passions, as if they were the promptings of kind spirits hovering unseen around us, point us to the path of success and happiness. They stimulate to exertion: they rouse to action: they teach us virtue, industry and self-reliance, and prepare us to shun the pit falls in our way.

You have now completed your course of preparatory study. You have creditably sustained the necessary examinations. Under the

sanction of the state, you have had conferred on you the highly honorable decree of Doctor of Medicine; and the diploma by which it is declared, will be your safe medical passport throughout the States, and an introduction and a recommendation throughout the civilized world. With it, you are now about to step forth upon the stage of action, to engage in the practice of a most difficult and responsible profession. Human life, with all the affections and interests that cling around and depend upon it, is to be committed to your keeping. You will be accountable in proportion to the magnitude of the trust. It is no trifling matter to overcome these difficulties and to discharge this trust. I am sure it can not be accomplished without learning, intelligence, energy, application and the strictest purity and integrity. I shall speak briefly upon the present occasion of these and other desirable qualifications, and of such legal questions and principles as concern the practice and character of your profession.

And first, of the learning of your profession. Do not for one moment suppose your medical education complete. Great as have been your opportunities here for acquiring knowledge, and much as those opportunities may have been

improved, you have but commenced the learning of your profession. Every day should add to your stock of knowledge. Do you know how much the community prize experience in a physician? If not, I fear you will be but too well convinced of it in the commencement of your practice, if it is your fortune to be placed in competition with those of longer professional standing. The physician must learn much—very much,—by careful observation and deliberate reflection. His whole life, if properly devoted, is the term of his education, during which, he should be constantly penetrating farther into the dark and fathomless mysteries of nature, on which depends the science he professes. He should never forget that a vast and undiscovered field lies before him; and he should never be contented to stop at the monument raised by some previous explorer.

I am a firm believer in the doctrine of progress. It rests upon a divine and most salutary law, by which advancement is made the just reward of merit. It is the votary of science only that receives her richest rewards. Those who kneel at her shrine are the favored worshipers. If the student would penetrate the

recesses of nature, he must not linger about the portals of her temple.

There are no departments of science more dependent upon progressive discovery and improvement, than those of surgery and physic. Mathematically demonstrative as is the character of the former, how great are its improvements and how brilliant its triumphs, within the last half century. How long is it since the deformed club-foot was restored, by the surgeon, to the beautiful proportions and the almost indispensable use designed by nature? How long, since as if by a touch of the magician's wand, the surgeon, in a moment, banished obliquity of vision—placed the eye in its proper balance in the socket, and restored to the human countenance its natural beauty? So recent is this wonderful triumph of your art, that I believe your own distinguished professor of surgery was the first to practice it here. How long is it since man acquired the magic power of rendering the patient insensible to pain, while a limb was amputated, or some more difficult surgical operation was performed? This, too, is within the recollection of the youngest of us; and so is a vast number of other discoveries and advances, of which these are but illustrations.

We boast of the triumphs of steam; of the discoveries in magnetism, and well we may; but in no department of science have greater advances been made than in surgery. If a nose be wanting, your professor supplies it. He makes the lame to walk and the blind to see. The time was when this could only be done by a miracle. How much further he will go remains to be seen; but certain it is, that almost every day brings to our astonished senses, evidence of some new but successful operation. Am I not justified in saying that we are yet but children in this department; and that Providence will continue for ages and ages to come, to lighten the burthens of humanity, by developing more and more of which we have now no knowledge and no conception?

But I have thus far spoken of surgery only. If we pass from that to medicine, it is like stepping from *terra firma* upon the unstable waves of the ocean; an ocean fathomless, except near shore—boundless, except by the regions we have left, and uncovered, except by illimitable space. As yet, we venture upon this element only as the mariner trusts his fragile bark upon the sea,—and we progress, as he has done, step by step from the canoe of the savage, to the junk of

half civilized life—the trireme of the Roman, and the obedient ship, and the wind-braving steamer of modern times. But who shall master this rolling sea?—who shall quiet its troubled waters and walk safely and at its will, over its surface?

To present to you a glance at the advance already made in physic, we need not go back to the ages of myth and fable, when the sacred and medical character were united in the same person. When the priest who ministered at the pagan altar, surrounded by the occult mysteries of his religion, was alone supposed to possess the power to relieve from pain and to restore to health. Egypt and Greece and Rome and the still more eastern and earlier nations of antiquity could bear witness, that magic and medicine were the earliest and most intimate friends.

But we have on our own continent and at the present day, in the medicine-man of our Indian tribes and the accomplished and learned physician from the medical college, an illustration of both the earlier condition and the present state of medical practice. Both extremes are before us, and we can easily compare them,

and see how vast, how beneficent a change knowledge has accomplished. The former is still surrounded by an air of mystery, most favorable among the untutored children of the forest, to a successful union of the religious and medical character. Dressed in the primitive garb of his tribe, and surrounded by the rude paraphernalia of his office, he inspires those around him with awe and reverence. He invokes the Great Spirit to aid in the battle-strife. By his rude eloquence, he rouses to fury the braves of his tribe, and sends them forth on the war path. He promises to the young warriors the smiles of beauty and the rewards of fame, if they survive the conflict; and if they perish, abundant hunting grounds in the future world. As if inspired, he prophecies of victory or defeat, of scalps taken or lives lost. He sits in his lodge as within a charmed circle, whose limits no one presumes to pass. If disease invades his village, his medical skill is put into requisition. His simple remedies may not assist the efforts of nature to regain the ascendency. He resorts to spells and charms and incantations to drive away the evil spirit that has possessed his patient. His skill is credited with the result, if the patient sur-

vives. If he dies, his death is charged to the unappeasable anger of the Great Spirit.

Such is the practice of medicine in its primitive state in the western forests; and such it must have been originally among those races from which we are descended. As we see it at the present day among ourselves, it has all the advantages of many centuries of discovery, improvement and experience. First of all, the physician now seeks an accurate and intimate acquaintance with the structure of the human body; the functions of the various organs, their use and object; the means by which they can be stimulated to increased action or be soothed to rest. Much, very much of Anatomy and Physiology has certainly been learned, but am I not right in saying that vastly more remains to be discovered? When shall we attain a full knowledge of machinery so complex, so wonderful and so perfect? When shall we comprehend that mysterious agency that gives pulsation to the heart?—that propels the blood in its rapid current through the veins?—When shall we understand the wonderful processes of digestion and assimilation?—When shall we comprehend absorption and perspiration?—When shall we learn how the nerves, little tele-

graphic wires convey instantly to the brain intelligence from every part of the system?—and how it is that the limb executes instantly the unexpressed will of the brain?—And more than all, when shall we understand the brain itself and its connexion with life and thought? Will not man be permitted to penetrate these arcana of nature? Will not the Great Author of our being permit these labyrinths to be explored step by step; each advance to be an epoch in medical history, as marked as when Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood; and each discovery the rich reward of genius and of study?

The well educated modern physician is deeply read in the lore of his profession. He begins at the point where his predecessor left it, thus availing himself of all previous observation and experiment. He classifies and arranges diseases. He studies their nature, ascertains their symptoms and tendencies, and thus, like a skilful general, he learns in time to counteract and expel them. The *materia medica* surrounds him with a world of learning, worthy a life of study. He finds healing remedies in the animal, the vegetable and the mineral kingdoms. He summons them all around him to minister, at his plea-

sure, to the health of man; and it is the highest triumph of knowledge and of art, that his skill converts the most deadly poisons into life-saving remedies.

And here, also, what remains to be done? What boundless regions are unexplored? The physician knows that *cantharides* will draw a blister; he has learned that many other insects have valuable medicinal properties; he infers from this that all of the hundred thousand insects are created for our use; yet of how few, comparatively, does he know the proper application.

The physician sees the earth covered with beautiful flowers and luxuriant vegetation. No one believes these are spread around us to delight the senses alone. The botanist gathers this flora, analyzes it, arranges it by its natural divisions of classes and orders, genera and species. Experience shows the great value to the healing art of the vegetable kingdom. It furnished the earliest and simplest remedies, and they have lost none of their popularity by lapse of time; and yet, comparatively, how little do we know of the medicinal virtues of the hundred and ten thousand plants strewn over the earth's surface? We examine the

flower before us, its pistils and its stamens, its petals and its calyx, determine its place in the *herbarium*, but they tell us not the particular disease it was designed to cure, nor how the remedy should be applied.

We dig into the bowels of the earth and draw forth its treasures to the light of day. Here, too, are found most powerful medical agents. The chemist, in the race of discovery he has so rapidly run during the last half century, analyzes old combinations and forms new ones, each simple substance and each combination, however unlimited numerically the variety of forms, being doubtless of inestimable medicinal value. Yet when shall all this knowledge be attained?

But the physician stops not here. From the atmosphere above us, he gathers electricity with which to startle his patient into health. Heat and cold, light and darkness are made subservient to his skill. And though every element around us is brought in aid of medical practice; that which is still unlearned seems to our comprehension infinite. Who will not delight to labor in a field that promises such abundant harvests of knowledge? Who is more entitled to undying fame than he that makes a new

discovery to aid in soothing pain, in assuaging sorrow, in drying up the tears of affliction, in restoring the smiles of joy and the bright anticipations of returning happiness? Who, under Providence, is more the benefactor of his race?

But an outside observer, in looking at the medical profession of the present day, is struck with the apparent conflict of opinion and of practice. Hahneman's followers deal in infinitesimal doses, and practice upon the peculiar doctrine, "*similia similibus curantur.*" Preisnitz cures all diseases by shower and plunge, and douche, and sitz bath. Start not, gentlemen, I will speak no heresy. If disposed, I certainly would not dare to do so here, within the fane of orthodoxy herself, and surrounded by her ministers. Promptly as I should put myself in charge of these gentlemen of the faculty, if suffering from illness, rest assured I would hazard no combat with them, physical or intellectual. I should expect to get sadly "cut up" in such a conflict. One of these professors, by his skill in interpreting symptoms, might divine my inmost thoughts and anticipate every hostile or defensive movement on my part. Another might take off an offending arm or leg in fifteen seconds. A third might proceed to dissect it

with accustomed coolness, and I might expect some of my mortal remains to be triumphantly put up and preserved in jars, in the anatomical museum—possibly to be used hereafter by another of the learned professors, in his lectures on medical jurisprudence, as curious relics of the subject.

No, gentlemen, I will utter no heresy, I speak only of the wide differences that exist between those who respectively believe in Allopathy, Homeopathy and Hydropathy, and the other classes of medical practitioners. "*Non mihi tantas componere lites.*" Upon this subject, as well as in religion and politics, I would allow the utmost freedom of opinion, believing firmly in the maxim of one of the great founders of our republic, that nothing can be feared from error of opinion, if reason is left free to combat it.

I have spoken of the great value of medical *experience;* but the importance of *learning* must by no means be undervalued. The physician should be thoroughly read in the mysteries of his profession. By the aid of books he should be able to avail himself of the study and experience of all who have gone before him. By the aid of books and well selected periodical medi-

cal publications, he should keep pace with his profession in its rapid march of improvement. By these means alone can he learn promptly the new remedies discovered, new modes of application, and the numerous inventions and improvements in surgical instruments and in medical appliances. These means improved, the physician avails himself of the genius and experience of his cotemporaries. These means neglected, he soon lags behind.

I am sure, young gentlemen, you will bear in mind, that your whole lives are to be lives of study, as well as of practice. In your profession, as well as in all others, eminence can only be attained by continued study and application.

I well recollect that soon after I commenced the practice of the law, in travelling through part of a neighboring state, business detained me for a day in a small village some hundreds of miles west of my residence. It so happened that a man had just been arrested, and was about to be examined before a magistrate, for an alleged offence. The only lawyer of the village was engaged for the prosecution. It was very naturally supposed that without counsel the prisoner's legal rights might be greatly

jeoparded; and it being understood that I belonged to the legal profession, several respectable gentlemen of the village applied to me to defend the accused. I sought to be excused, on the ground of my desire to proceed on my journey and my ignorance of their local statute laws. But a moment's reflection satisfied me that the accused greatly needed assistance, and I had a curiosity to see how judicial proceedings were conducted in another state. So I undertook his defence. I found the magistrate a highly intelligent individual, as it is said all magistrates are. My opponent, a licensed practitioner at the bar, was a shrewd man, of middle age, adroit in examining and cross-examining witnesses, civil and courteous, but evidently not very profoundly read in the learning of his profession. It was soon apparent that the prosecuting counsel, had entirely misconceived the character of the transaction charged as the offence. As a physician would say, he had mistaken the *diagnosis* of the case. After the accused was discharged, very much I trust to his own satisfaction, as it certainly was to mine, I entered into a more familiar conversation with the opposite counsel. He informed me that he was a native of this state—had read law here

for a part of the then prescribed time, and had emigrated to the state where he then resided, because he could be admitted there to practice under a less rigid requirement of study. He had been for many years busily engaged in the humbler walks of his profession, but had not advanced to that position to which his natural ability seemed to entitle him. The reason was obvious when I learned the state of his library. He told me he kept but one book, and that was "Cowen's Treatise, the first edition:" and he closed by informing me that he needed no books, because he considered himself a *natural lawyer*.

Now, gentlemen, I believe in neither natural lawyers, natural bone-setters, nor natural doctors.

The physician should be learned in the various departments of natural history, and in those sciences that come in aid of his profession. He should be acquainted with botany and chemistry and natural philosophy. He should thoroughly understand the nature and character, and be able to judge of the quality of the medicines he administers. Analysis and synthesis should be his handmaids.

I hold, too, a knowledge of the dead languages to be a most necessary qualification for

the thoroughly taught physician. The Greek tongue has furnished the names of many diseases and of medical and surgical instruments. From the Latin are taken the names of the organs and parts constituting the human body and of the *materia medica*. These terms were selected with much care by scientific men, and are generally expressive, in their signification, of the things they represent.

I know there has been an outcry, from certain quarters, against making the study of the languages of Greece and Rome a necessary part of a course of liberal education. But the outcry is an emanation from ignorance or prejudice, or both combined. Independent of the pleasure to be derived from being able to read the classic productions of antiquity in the language in which they were written, their beauty undiminished by translation, and the advantage of imperceptibly forming our own style by these models, and of better understanding the etymology of our own language, so large a portion of which is derived from these ancient languages, the fact that they have continued to be the languages of the learned for two thousand years, and that in these tongues were originally recorded almost every discovery, invention and

improvement during this whole term of time, renders a knowledge of them most desirable to every man of general learning, and indispensable to every votary of professional science.

What are called the dead languages are still the living languages of science, and recognized as such among the learned of every civilized country on the earth. In botany, plants are named from the Latin, and every plant is known by the same name throughout the four quarters of the globe. In no other way could the name be universal. If Linnæus had given to a flower a Swedish name, it would have been known by that name only throughout Sweden—and the English botanist would have given to the same plant an English name. In France there would have been selected a French name, and a new name would thus have been bestowed, wherever a different language was spoken. All these various names for one thing, being arbitrary, and having of themselves no signification, endless confusion would have followed. Under such a system, or rather I should say, under such a multitude of systems, botany could have made no progress. Correspondence between the learned of all nations would have been most effectually cut off, and combined effort and re-

ciprocal aid could not have existed. Books would have been comparatively useless, except to those in whose language they were written.

This illustration is applicable to most of the sciences. The Latin is the medium through which the learned communicate their ideas: and in few of the sciences and professions more than in those of physic and surgery. If you describe the bones which enclose the brain as the *cranium*, the educated Frenchman, and Russian, and German, will immediately understand you: but if you call them *the skull*, the Frenchman will shake his head and shrug his shoulders, as ignorant of your meaning as you might be of his, if he should call them *le crane*.

And while I hold a knowledge of the dead languages indispensable to the education of the physician and surgeon, I ought to add that a knowledge of some of the modern languages is a most desirable and useful accomplishment. It is only by being able to read the French and the German, that you readily avail yourselves of the discoveries in medical science, and the improvements in medical skill, so numerous and so valuable, which are frequently made by the learned men who write in these languages.

You have just been declared doctors of medi-

cine. The very title implies that you are learned in your profession. Indeed, while, in other professions, few are made Doctors of Divinity, and fewer still Doctors of Laws, universal custom has assigned the learned title of doctor *par excellence* to every one who practices the healing art; and it is your duty to see that your profession answers the public expectation, and that this title of honor is not unworthily bestowed.

You are soon to separate, and go forth over this broad and beautiful and prosperous land, to select your several places of residence. I know how difficult it is for a young man to start in the successful practice of a profession, when he is surrounded by those of established reputation; and I believe, that in your profession, it is more difficult than in any other, to overcome the natural prejudice against youth and inexperience. But I know, too, that perseverance and merit will overcome every obstacle. The prerequisite to success, is, the confidence of the community in which you dwell; confidence in your skill, your faithfulness, and above all, in your integrity. This confidence is of gradual growth, but will keep exact pace with the development of your merits.

You will look forward to competence and per-

haps to wealth and eminence; but you will not, I trust, lose all the finer feelings of the man in the pursuit of gain. If you would secure a reward richer than gold or fame, you will never pass by the door of the poor man, who needs your professional aid; you will gladly enjoy the heartfelt satisfaction of entering his humble abode, and ministering faithfully to his necessities. You will never forget, that heavy as is the hand of sickness upon all, it presses with peculiar weight and with chilling touch upon the heart of the poor man, who needs all his health and strength to provide for those he loves, around him. Neglect of the poor on your part, would be the beginning of a new era in the history of the medical profession, which has always been distinguished for its charity in an indiscriminate practice.

The relations of the physician to the members of the community in which he practices, are of the most confidential and delicate character. His, should be the very soul of honor, and of virtue. He is the daily witness, during his whole life, of pain and suffering. But his heart must not, therefore, become hardened, nor must the fountain of his sympathies be dried up.

Who, that has suffered on a bed of sickness, has not looked forward with longing anxiety for the appointed visit of his physician, and greeted his arrival with tears of joy? Who has not felt that his physician was his friend, his comforter, and his benefactor? Have you ever stood by the couch, on which, lay the form of one you loved — a child perhaps — shrunken and pale, emaciated with disease, and patiently suffering from pain; by whom you have watched unceasingly for days and nights uncounted, with hope and fear alternating; anxiously watching every changing symptom, real or imaginary; with breathless anxiety seeking the physician's interpretation of it at every oft repeated visit; and reading in the expression of his face, how little hope was left, when in the kindness of his heart, he is reluctant to utter it; urging him, as if he possessed supernatural power, to save the life you prize more dearly than your own? * * * * * * The physician enters again. You still bend over the bed-side; — the room is darkened; — the patient still breathes, but faintly; — the pulse is fast subsiding; — no human skill can save; — the flame of life flickers in the socket and expires. The spirit of the loved one

has departed forever. Overwhelmed in grief, you feel the utter desolation that surrounds you. The world, for a time, has lost for you all its attraction, and the future here, has no promise. Depend upon it, the kind-hearted physician, has always a tear to shed over misery like this; a tear of real, heart-felt sympathy. No recurrence of such scenes can ever make him less than man.

You have learned from the lectures of a distinguished professor of this Institution, how intimately connected are some of your professional duties with the subject of Jurisprudence. From necessity, you must be occasionally called as witnesses in courts of Justice. Witnesses odinarily state facts only, from which the jury draws the conclusions. One of the exceptions to this general rule, is the case of a physician, called to testify to a matter concerning his professional judgment. In case of a trial for murder, for example, none but a physician can give his opinion under oath, whether the wounds inflicted were of a character, and sufficient to cause death; whether they were inflicted before or after death, &c. The physician is called upon to state his opinions and the result of his judgment on the facts shown, the matter being

within the range of his peculiar knowledge. This testimony is of the gravest importance: upon it not unfrequently depends the life of the accused. I know of no better place in which to test the capacity and the candor of a man, than to place him on the witness' stand; and courts and juries very properly judge of the weight to which testimony is entitled, by the appearance and manner of the witness. I have seen physicians examined as witnesses, who were so utterly unable to state an opinion clearly, or to give a satisfactory reason for entertaining it, that it added nothing to the strength of the case; while another physician examined upon the same point, made a statement that satisfied the minds of every hearer.

I recollect defending, many years ago, a very respectable physician, who was sued for improperly setting the bones of his neighbor's foot. The foot had been crushed and the bones badly fractured, and certain it was, the foot was shockingly deformed, and the poor man a cripple for life. On the trial at the circuit, several medical witnesses had been examined on both sides. As doctors will do, sometimes, they differed widely in opinion as to the mode of treating such fractures, and, of course, as to the

cause of the injury. The suit was in a very doubtful condition: if the doctors could not agree, we had no right to suppose the jury would. On neither side had the witnesses seemed to entertain any very clear ideas of the subject. The plaintiff was in court, and had there submitted his foot to the scrutiny of the physicians, as well as the inspection of the jury. Just as we were about adjourning for dinner, Doctor Gaius Halsey arrived. He was a man of commanding presence and powerful intellect, and stood, the acknowledged head of his profession, throughout his own and the adjacent counties. He was justly distinguished for his surgical skill. During the recess, he gave to the suffering limb a most thorough and critical examination. On the opening of court in the afternoon, he was called as a witness, and he stated his opinions so clearly, for every one of which he gave a reason so plain and satisfactory, that I believe he carried conviction to the minds even of the physicians who had previously expressed different opinions. With the limb before him, he demonstrated the correctness of his views so conclusively, that the jury promptly gave their verdict in favor of the defendant. Thus ended the suit of Kelly vs.

Knapp; and I regret to add, the very able surgeon to whom I have alluded died a few years after, while still young and before he had realized the full promise of his growing professional fame.

As to the manner of testifying, gentlemen, let me give you one word of advice. Make your statements in simple language. Leave out the technical words and phrases of your profession, and substitute in their place plain English. Remember that you are not talking to medical men, and that not a man in the jury box will give you one whit the more credit for learning, because you testify in a language he can not comprehend.

You ought to understand perfectly in the outset your legal rights and liabilities. When a physician is employed professionally, he is regarded as contracting on his part that he possesses and will exercise ordinary skill in his profession, and that he will be guilty of no negligence. Beyond these, he is not responsible for the result; but if he fail in either of these requirements of skill and care, he is legally liable to the injured party to the full extent of the damage sustained. At common law there was no action if death ensued from neglect or default.

The action lay only for damages sustained when death was not a consequence. But by the legislative act of 1847, an action, in case of death, is given to the personal representatives, in which action the amount of damages to be recovered is limited by the statute of 1849, to five thousand dollars. Suits are not unfrequently brought against members of the medical profession, to recover damages for some alleged want of surgical skill or care; but rarely in mere medical cases, for the obvious reason, perhaps, that in the latter class it is much more difficult to detect and prove the alleged injury. A recovery, in a suit of this character, against a physician or surgeon, could not fail to be most seriously detrimental to his professional standing. Many suits, however, of this description, which have come under my observation, have proved to be entirely groundless, and an investigation only served to confirm and establish, on a still stronger foundation, the professional reputation assailed.

While the law has thus declared your liability, it has provided liberally for your protection. You may be assailed by calumny. Envy or malice may seek to detract from your professional reputation. Against such assaults, you have an

ample shield in the action given you for damages. It is actionable to charge a physician with ignorance or want of skill generally in his profession, or to impute to him a want of integrity generally, or in any particular instance. But though you are so broadly protected against injuries of this description, an action for slander should rarely if ever be brought, unless indispensable to the preservation of your professional standing. In trivial cases, and most of them are of that character, you will act more wisely to disregard the accusation, leaving time and observation to vindicate you from the charge. You breathe upon the polished mirror and a cloud of vapor rests upon and obscures it; but in a moment the cloud passes away, the brightness of its lustre undimmed and undiminished.

But I fear I have detained you too long.—You are now about to set out upon the journey of professional life. It is a long and rugged, but I trust pleasant road that lies before you. You will never forget the friendships you have formed among yourselves, while here—friendships, I trust, to be revived and strengthened when, in your wanderings, it shall be your good fortune to meet again. You will look back with pleasure to the hours you have spent in this institu-

tion, under the instruction of its learned professors. There is an indissoluble chain that binds you to the *alma mater*, upon whose lap you have been taught and nurtured. Her fame and yours are identical. You will always stand ready to defend her honor and promote her interests. She bestows on you her blessing. She invokes for you the smiles of a kind Providence, and her most anxious wish is, that with valued professional honors, each of you may pass through life in the enjoyment of that abundant happiness with which Virtue rewards her followers.

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